
[Speeches 1949](#)[Speeches](#)

1949

1949 Snowshoeing Speech

Louis-Philippe Gagné

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/fac-lpg-speeches-1949>

Recommended Citation

Please cite as: Louis-Philippe Gagné Papers, Franco-American Collection, University of Southern Maine.

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Speeches at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Speeches 1949 by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu.

I am very grateful to your President, Sam Michaels, for his very kind presentation. I don't feel I deserve that much credit. In fact I think he has been a little too generous about me. What goes on today in the Snowshoe world is the direct result of co-operation and sportsmanship on the part of everyone ~~of~~ the snowshoers during the past twenty-five years.

I wish to thank Mr. Harris for his invitation to be here to-night for a few comments on the coming International Snowshoers' Convention.

I surmise that most of you remember the first visit of our neighbors from Canada, 25 years ago. But those of you who may not have witnessed any such winter event in the past might as well prepare for something spectacular. To most people, a snowshoers' convention is nothing but two big parades and ~~celebrations~~ a swell time for two days. But there is much more to it than that.

First, if there is to-day an American Snowshoe Union that belongs to an International Union or Committee, there must be another ~~group~~ affiliated group. And there is one, namely the Canadian Snowshoe Union. There were some snowshoe clubs in Canada as far back as in 1872, but they did not belong to any association or union. The idea of grouping them all was instigated in Montreal, in 1906, by Arthur Lamallice, then a member of Le Montagnard Snowshoe Club of that great City. The following year, various clubs ~~in~~ in the Province of Quebec met ~~at~~ ^{at} Montreal and held a first convention, which was not official, but that was the occasion for the Canadian Union to become a reality. That was on March 8, 1907, and eighteen clubs became members.

In 1924, the Canadian Union became larger by the addition of the Western Canadian ~~branch~~ ^{an} branch of snowshoe clubs, ~~especially~~ mainly from Manitoba.

And that same year, in 1924, something else was developing right here in Lewiston-Auburn, that was to take greater proportions than expected.

Permit me, at this time, to divert a little from my subject, and tell you of a speech I heard in Boston, a few years ago, at a meeting of the Foreign Language Press Association. The speaker put it this way:

"The United States might be compared to a symphony of nations. Every national group in this country is like one single musical instrument, each having a specific action to perform, each with an individual purpose and characteristic, but all of them giving to the symphony the blend and harmony that make the general beauty of such an ensemble. Every group in these United States of America has a distinct characteristic, whether it be in science, in language, in music, in commerce, in trade, in sports, or in any other field. And all of them have brought to this country the blend, the ensemble that make America what she is today.

A few years before 1922, I happened to be sports editor of a Quebec daily newspaper, and as such I had the occasion to follow the activities of the snowshoe clubs in my native country. In 1922, I was one of the 200,000 Canadians who came to the United States, and when I was settled, I thought it might be possible to have some organized snowshoers right here and then invite the clubs from across the border to come and visit us. I started recruiting some local residents that might have been interested. However, I had to call three meetings before having a quorum. Finally we met and organized, and a friend from Le Montagnard snowshoe club, of Montreal, had given ~~us~~ permission to ~~propose~~ our group to take the same name of Le Montagnard, and he even sent me his own uniform so we could have the same colors for our costumes. That's how Le Montagnard, of Lewiston, was founded, in 1924. Then, as secretary, I took upon myself to write to everyone of the Canadian clubs--there were 50 of them--inviting them to have their next convention in ~~Lewiston~~ the United States, for the first time in history. After receiving the pledge of one of them, I wrote another letter to every other club, telling about the one that was coming. Then ~~it was~~ a second club, and a third one, and finally most all of them were coming, and during all summer I wrote a special letter of information to every paper in the Province of Quebec.

Then, in September 1924, at a meeting of our Le Montagnard Club, we had to

take a formal vote for an invitation to be sent to the Canadian Union. But many members thought it was rather ambitious and said we were not ~~xxxx~~ ready for such a venture. I told them I had already invited every club, and I showed all the letters I had received, but I could not move the opposition. When the vote was taken, I ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ counted the raised hands ~~in~~ pro or con, ~~and~~ Thirty-~~xxx~~ members were present, but no one knew the exact number. Fifteen had voted for the invitation, and when the others raised their hands against, I ~~just counted fourteen~~ stop^{ped} counting at fourteen!!!!!! The day was saved, and so the future International Snowshoe Union!

The Canadian Union voted to ~~xxxxxxx~~ accept our invitation, but they told us they could not have their convention in any city where there were no snowshoe clubs with their own uniforms. We told them we ~~had~~ already had many members in costumes. However, when they came here, they found we had only three: John B. St. Pierre, the late Nap. Hamel and myself, ready for the big parade! ~~But~~ That convention, by the way, twenty-five years ago, had nothing official, except some races for the world championship.

It was a few weeks later that the American Snowshoe ~~U~~ Union was organized, with four clubs: Le Montagnard, the Cercle Canadian, the Jacques Cartier, and the Red Devils.

To-day, the American Union has thirty-eight clubs: 20 men's clubs and 18 women's clubs in Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. ^xIn 1932, an International Committee was organized, with seven Canadian members and seven ~~xxxx~~ American members. They meet twice a year and rule over both Unions.

Now that you know ~~about~~ the history of the snowshoe clubs, let me give you some facts about our ~~convention~~ coming convention:

Starting to-morrow afternoon, some snowshoers from outside will arrive here.

Two of them will come from Biddeford after a 52 mile hike to Lewiston.

Any snowshoer hiking to a convention, whether ~~in~~ from Montreal, Quebec,

Lewiston or Manchester, must first receive the approval of ~~the~~ his respective Union to do so. After his arrival at destination, he is entitled to a special

The headquarters are at Lewiston, and our present Secretary, Raymond J. Desroque, who has held that office for the past nineteen years, is mainly the dynamo of the organization, and a perfect executive.

certificate unless it can be proved that he has been given rides.

Two more snowshoers are hiking to Lewiston. They are from Manchester, and are expected Friday.

In a day or two

~~Thursday evening~~, the contest for the Queen of the Convention will close.

One of the two contestants will be proclaimed Queen, and the other will become princess. Both will take part in every activity of the Convention.

The ~~coronation~~ coronation of the queen will take place Thursday evening, at nine o'clock, at the armory, with all the local clubs taking part.

Most of the officials of the Convention will be here Thursday. Friday, it will be open house in every local club, for visiting snowshoers already here for the festivities. It is expected that a few hundreds will arrive by train, by bus and in their own cars, on Friday.

But the ~~most~~ greatest number will arrive Saturday morning, between seven and eight. Some 75 big busses will come from all parts of Canada, bringing some 2,000 snowshoers in costumes, with their bugle and drum corps, and some with their bands. One of those clubs, Le Laviolette, from Three Rivers, Quebec, will have a band and the ^{its} expenses are paid by the City ~~of Three Rivers~~ Government of Three Rivers.

A very interesting point is this: No club has the right to have the same color of costume as ^{of} any other club belonging to the same Union. That explains why the parades are so colorful.

Speaking of parades, I would advise you not to miss the spectacular event scheduled for Saturday evening, at seven o'clock. Seventy-seven clubs from Canada and all parts of New England are to take part. More than 1,000 railroad flares ~~are~~ of red and green colors are to be used all along the route, ~~and~~ together with more than 500 loud aerial bombs. The parade will end with the traditional assault against the ice palace, in the City Park, amid fireworks and bombs.

If you are away on Saturday night, plan to see the same parade, less the flares and the bombs, of course, on Sunday morning, at 10 o'clock.

Saturday morning, keys to the two cities will be presented by the Mayors of Lewiston and Auburn to the presidents of the Canadian and American Snowshoe Union respectively. That will be in the City Park, ^{at 11 o'clock} and on that occasion, the Governor of Maine will be made a full fledged snowshoer when he will be presented an expensive sash, a toque and a pair of snowshoes. He will then walk on snowshoes ~~for the benefit of~~ and there will be experts of the television and various moving pictures agencies to advertise our Governor and our State to the entire world.

Saturday morning, at 10:15, a 10 mile marathon will take place for the International trophy which is in competition since 1935. To have it permanently, a club must win it ~~in~~ for three consecutive years. A club from Quebec City has won it for the past two years, but other clubs are mindful of that and have registered more members than ever before in the marathon to prevent the present title holder to win it for the third time.

Now, just to show you what kind of competition can be expected, I want to inform you that a snowshoer from Montreal, who will be 67 years of age next June, has registered for that 10 mile marathon. He is Eugene Clouette. Twenty-five years ago, when he was 42 and father of at least 12 children, he came very close to win the 3 mile race for the world's championship, right here in the Lewiston City Park. Others among ^{the 175} ~~those~~ who will take part either in the marathon or the various races for the world or the American championships are former contestants in the Boston Marathon, ~~xxxxxxklyx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ include ^{ing} ~~xxxxxx~~ Lloyd Evans, a very dangerous challenger. Those races will be run near the Lewiston Armory.

The coming convention is being organized through an executive committee responsible to the Lewiston and Auburn Snowshoe Union, which is composed of 12 local clubs.

~~Announcements~~

I think I have covered the entire subject. I may add that for the past twenty-five years, the organized snowshoe sport has known quite a transition. There is law and order to-day, whereas in former years you could hardly find out who was responsible for some damages that might have occurred in stores, hotels or restaurants. The snowshoers of to-day all wear on their left shoulder a ribbon with a certain number. That number corresponds to the number of their International Card. It becomes very easy for the organizing committee or for anyone else to know the name and the club of any snowshoer who might forget to be a gentleman. His club is responsible for any damage, and the snowshoer is thrown out of the organization. All of them are jolly good fellows; they go to a convention to enjoy life and have the local people enjoy it too. There are no elections during a convention. Elections are held at the annual meeting, ~~sometimes~~ in October. The only meeting at the convention is held by the ~~former presidents~~ International Committee. There is another meeting, rather social, held by the former presidents of both Unions. These ~~men~~ might be compared to the members of the 40 and 8 organization of the American Legion. Another item for your information: the snowshoe sport in all the United States ~~is~~ ^{controlled} is officially ~~directed~~/from Lewiston; ~~because~~ and that goes for the snowshoers of Lake Placid or the northern part of the New York State as well. Our clubs and our American Union are affiliated ^{with} ~~to the~~ ~~with~~ A.A.U. of the United States.

I am convinced that the past International conventions have helped tremendously to the good relations between Canada and the United States, and have greatly contributed to publicize our beloved State of Maine and its winter sports. That's a kind of publicity you could not buy with money. Good will, together with a good neighbor policy are the best assets to any State or community.